

## Hobbies

# Some new insights on a few old coins

By Roger Boye

**H**ere are the answers to questions about old or unusual coins.

**Q**—What does "VDB" mean in reference to Lincoln pennies? Are "VDB" coins special?

**B.N., Highland Park**

**A**—Those letters are the initials of sculptor and coin designer Victor D. Brenner, whose one-cent piece was first issued in 1909 on the 100th anniversary of Lincoln's birth. "VDB" appears prominently on the "tails side" of some 1909-dated Lincolns, resulting in the notations "1909 VDB" or "1909-S VDB" in price guides (the "S" is for San Francisco).

Just 484,000 of the 1909-S VDB cents were made, lowest mintage in the Lincoln-cent se-

ries. By comparison, Uncle Sam produced about nine billion Lincolns last year.

Starting in 1918, the initials were placed on the "heads side," near the rim at 7 o'clock, where they still are today. But you'll probably need a magnifying glass to see them because of their tiny size.

**Q**—We own several coins marked "Helvetia." Where are they from?

**T.H., Chicago**

**A**—Switzerland, which was called "Helvetia" in ancient times. The name still is used on modern-day Swiss coinage.

**Q**—My grandfather left us a gold-coin chain with four old \$5 gold pieces. All of the coins have holes drilled in them. Are they collectible?

**E.R., Joliet**

**A**—In general, gold coins with holes are worth their "metal value" only unless the date is quite rare. Each of your coins contains about a quarter-ounce of gold, and the chain also might have some value.

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Canada's 1993 silver dollar commemorates the 100th anniversary of hockey's Stanley Cup, oldest sports trophy in North America.

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